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Gregory the Illuminator and Anak the Parthian

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Note: Two works examined in this study are available at Internet Archive in English and multilingual translations: Agat'angeghos' *History* (Selections), and The Book of Deeds of Ardashir Papakan (known as the *Karnamak*). For more online resources see the Additional Resources section at the end.

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Modern criticism has demonstrated that the *History* of Agathangeghos, as it has come down to us, is a compilation. The *Life* of Gregory forms the fundamental part, while the *Martyrdom of the Virgins*, as well as the *Teaching* and the *Vision* of Gregory, are the additions. The four parts, with their different origins, have been skillfully woven together to form a whole.

The *Life* of Gregory itself is not a homogeneous work. It has a fully historical core surrounded by a rather legendary martyrological shell. It is true that legendary elements and imaginary miracles have become the ordinary adornment of all martyrologies, but there is still a *modus in rebus* [moderation in things]. Here, the outrageous inventions—even concerning saints of otherwise unassailable reputation—prove that the authors of these accounts were insufficiently informed about events, and that they therefore had to resort to imaginary material to fill in the gaps. Were there no other proofs, the miracles recounted by Agathangeghos alone would be enough to cast doubt on whether he was, as he claims, an eyewitness.

In the jumble of martyrdom, we can barely discern a few isolated and precious certainties.

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The attempt at a biography of Gregory obviously belongs to a period when the image of the founder of the Armenian Church had become rather obscured in popular memory. The nascent literature [in 5th-century Armenia] was bound to contribute to a surge of national consciousness and to excite interest in the country's past. There is no reason to believe that the history of the Illuminator could have been written in a foreign language before the appearance of Armenian writing.

However great the fame of Saint Gregory was from the beginning of his mission, one thing is certain: it was above all the first Armenian intellectuals who promoted his name, surrounded him with a halo and made a national apostle out of him.

It was they who sought to collect and fix the still living—though already altered—traditions about the foundation of the Armenian Church, traditions relating to the life of the founder of the church,

his royal collaborator, and the miraculous conversion of the Armenians. The legends circulating about Gregory, Tiridates, the holy Rhipsimean virgins or those relating to the first churches, the form and spirit in which these legends were originally conceived and written, remain the secret of antiquity, presently insoluble for us.

However, they were apparently known to the author, who is concealed under the name of "Agathangeghos" ["Bringer of Good News"]. It was he who collected the various pieces, and adapted them to each other to elaborate a complete history. During this revision, it is possible that the old version was amputated at many points and that new details were introduced to eliminate the inconsistency and achieve a harmonious construction consistently held together.

Although the author tried to erase the traces of his revision, they nevertheless remained clearly visible. The German scholar Gutschmidt—to whom we owe the best and most daring criticism of *Agathangeghos*, although made without knowing Armenian and based only on translations—was able to follow and note the connections of the various pieces joined together, like the seams that unite pieces into a single whole.

Agathangeghos claims to have written as a contemporary and witness to the events. Yet he admits to having used written sources. "I am not," he says, "a skillful phraser, who tells lies; but I have left most of them out and have reported only the little I have drawn from competent scholars."

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The same author presents himself, in his preface, as the secretary of King Tiridates and says he wrote his story "according to the works of chronographic historians." In recounting the *Martyrdom of the Virgins*, he mentions that their *Lives* already had been written down and were known to his readers. The Greek translator has prudently removed this clumsiness. The *Vision* is a poetic fiction, as tendentious as the *Teaching*, which is a composition modeled in large part on Basil's *Haexameron*, similar to those harangues which ancient historians put into the mouths of their favorite heroes. Gregory, emerging from the pit, was surrounded by the crowd which addressed him, saying: "You will certainly not have forgotten all the evils we have inflicted on you, and you will therefore give us the true doctrine." The author thus believes he is preparing the ground for the *Teaching*. Although it occupies the greater part of his work, neither this *Teaching* nor the *Vision* are to be attributed to Gregory.

The *Life* of Gregory—the historical core of this literary work by Agathangeghos—is also stitched together from various pieces. Gutschmidt has already drawn the necessary conclusion from this fact that in one passage Gregory's stay in the pit is estimated at thirteen years and in another at fifteen; this discrepancy is due to the difference in sources. Striking similarities have recently been noted between the passion of Gregory and that of *Gourias and Shmona*, martyrs of Edessa. This observation is likely to offer a new basis for distinguishing the mission of St. Gregory from his martyrology. One belongs to history, the other to literature.

In the historical part, the *Life* of St. Gregory is considered the most accurate, although it too does not appear to be exempt from doubtful elements. From the moment that Gregory's youth became linked to that of Tiridates, historical accuracy ran the risk of fading and becoming altered. The prejudices of the feudal *milieu* were going to put their mark on the image of St. Gregory. It could not be admitted that the glorious illuminator of the Armenian country had an ordinary origin. He must, whether this were true or false, come from noble Parthian lineage, from this famous line which, in his time, was

reputed to be the first in all the East and had shone with splendor on many royal thrones. Gregory, therefore, could not be a simple mortal; he is given a descent from that branch of the Parthians called Suren, and becomes the son of Prince Anak.

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This is not the only attempt to connect Gregory with the Arsacid family. Zenob, a simplistic writer, tells another story—truly surprising—and appealing enough to have tempted even Movses of Khoren:

A certain Burdar, from a noble Persian family, emigrated to the regions of Gamirk (= Cappadocia), and married Sophi, sister of a wealthy man named Euthalius, in Caesarea. A year later, Burdar, taking his wife, set out for his homeland, in Persia. His brother-in-law Euthalius followed him. Arriving in the province of Ayrarat, at the city of Vagharshapat, Sophi entered the service of the child Gregory as a wet nurse, and she raised him.

When, following the assassination of the Armenian king Khosrov, the entire family of Anak was wiped out, Burdar took the child Gregory from his mother Oguhi, handed him over to his wife Sophi, and they went to Cappadocia, accompanied, of course, by his brother-in-law. There Gregory received his education, learning the Greek and Syriac languages and literatures. At the age of twelve, he married Maryam, daughter of a pious man named David. He had two sons, Vrt'anes and Aristakes.

Agathangeghos is not unaware of this version. According to Zenob, along with Gregory his brother, Suren, escaped the sword, and this Suren was raised in the land of Persia by his paternal aunt. According to Agathangeghos, two children were also saved and raised by wet nurses, "one in the regions of Persia, the other in the Greek lands."

Nor is he unaware that the Illuminater had sons: "Some knowledgeable persons," he says, "informed the king that Gregory, when young, had married and had two sons. The first young man, named Vrt'anes, led a secular life at first, and then embraced the priesthood." The second son, Aristakes, from childhood devoted himself to the ascetic life.

Zenob mentions a certain Nicomachus, a solitary, to whom Aristakes had gone. Agathangeghos does not give his name, he suggests that it was not Aristakes who went, but that he "found certain people who adhered to him."

It is not improbable that in ancient times two independent legends circulated concerning the origin of the Illuminator. One claimed to demonstrate that Gregory was of Parthian blood and that he was the son of Prince Anak. The other, in its initial form, appears to have given Burdar as Gregory's father. Nor is Burdar himself of ordinary origin either; he belongs to a noble Persian family or, as Movses of Khoren puts it, "he was **[237]** not of the least and the obscure." Burdar's wife is a Cappadocian, sister of Euthalius, who, himself, is a renowned personage.

It follows that Gregory is not a stranger to the West; by his origin, he has one foot in the East, the other in the West.

From this circumstance, a doubt spontaneously arises: would not the legend, in its primitive version, have given Euthalius and Sophi as Gregory's parents? Then, to link the young Gregory to an oriental

nobility, Euthalius would have been replaced by Burdar.

The two versions—one about Anak, the other about Burdar—having merged, a story was created in which Burdar and his wife are no longer Gregory's father and mother, but where Sophi becomes the nurse and Euthalius the father-in-law of Burdar.

The choice of names is consistent with the custom of legendary stories. *Euthalios* is opulent, which is the meaning of the Greek εὐθάλιοσ; *Sophia*, σοφία is wisdom; *Burdar*—evidently from the Persian *burdār* "carrier"—is a suitable name for the person charged with nurturing the child.

It seems that the circumstances of Gregory's childhood are modeled on those of Tiridates, a most astonishing coincidence! Two children, victims of the same family disaster, run away, escape to a foreign country, meet, and serve the same cause.

The adventurous experiences which both of them had as youths, and their final triumph, are of a romantic, rather than historical, character and, no doubt, one was modeled on the other.

However, it is easier to challenge the veracity of these legends than to reestablish the historical reality they reflect. Tiridates' flight is probable, although the circumstances given by Agathangeghos are dubious. [Armenian historian] Eghishe knows that King Tiridates, "in his childhood having escaped from his uncles, the murderers of his father, was saved and raised in the Greek country" [In English, at Internet Archive, p. 123]. Eghishe therefore had other information on the assassination of the Armenian king; the authors of his death were said to have been his own brothers. This is a fact that undermines the basis of Agathangeghos' version.

The Byzantine author Zonaras tells us, according to [a lost book of the *History* of] Cassius Dio, that under the Emperor Gallus, the Persians invaded Armenia, while King Tiridates fled and his sons went over to the Persian side (II, 589) [In English, at Internet Archive, p. 51]. The testimony on this event makes data from the Armenian sources suspect.

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Emperor Gall[ien]us reigned in 251-253. At that time, the Armenian throne was occupied by Tiridates. This means that after the assassination of Khosrov by Ardashir the Sassanid, in around 237, Armenia was still a kingdom. Tiridates had succeeded his father. In 253, under pressure from the Persians, he had fled to the West, but he had done so as a reigning king and was no longer a child.

The conjectures made by scholars to reconcile these data with those of Armenian sources are not convincing and should be rejected.

It is not unlikely that the story of Tiridates and his father Khosrov is clothed with epic ornaments, in the Armenian tradition.

The *genre* of heroic epic, widespread in the East, was familiar among the Armenian nobility, as well as among the Persian nobility. The image of Tiridates was no less heroic than that of Ardashir the Sassanid. The latter had inaugurated the Persian renaissance by founding the new and glorious dynasty and restoring the ancient Iranian religion, propagated by Zoroaster. The former was the crowned precursor of Christianity in Armenia and the founder of the Armenian Arsacid dynasty.

The life of Ardashir is embellished with wonderful legends. The *Karnamak*, the book of Ardashir's life, is an exceptional work in historical literature. It is a specimen of epic history that gives us an idea of the common themes of popular creation at that time.

There is reason to believe that the story of Tiridates was not without legends, based on similar themes. *Agathangeghos* presents only the dry skeleton of the events.

The Greek translation of *Agathangeghos* begins with a fragment that is missing in today's Armenian text. It contains the rather legendary story of Ardashir's war with Ardavan. We find a variation of it repeated in the *Karnamak.* Agathangeghos' contact with the *Karnamak,* thus established, deserves attention.

Moreover, it is believed that the fragment in question was not taken from *Agathangeghos*, but that the Greek translator added it from another unknown source.

This is a very difficult conjecture to support. Indeed, what could have motivated the Greek translator to add to his Armenian text a Persian legend, which had no religious interest? **[239]** From the ecclesiastical point of view, the story of Ardashir, as it is in this fragment, is only an unattractive and misplaced episode. The translation of *Agathangeghos* would have no other aim than to present to the Greek world the origin of the Armenian Church, the life of its founder, the knowledge of which was pursued with so much interest—at least during the religious controversies. Why then would the translator have taken from his original a fragment so foreign to the spiritual domain? Therefore, it is probable that the fragment was indeed found in *Agathangeghos'* Armenian text. It is surprising that the Greek does not mention the name of Agathangeghos. Did he not know that the work to be translated was attributed to Tiridates' secretary himself? The translator certainly could not have neglected such valuable information if the preface, in its present form, had been before him. It is true that the general meaning of the preface is known to the Greek translator—where an author seeking to compose a book is compared to a merchant sailing the seas to collect treasure. However, it does not yet follow that the translator had at his disposal the preface as it currently exists in Armenian.

Probably it must be admitted that the preface of *Agathangeghos* was rewritten, perhaps in connection with the name of Agathangeghos, supposed secretary of King Tiridates, which was intended to be introduced into it. The old preface, judging from the Greek, must have been much more concise and free from that prolix and artificial style, whose wordy construction characterizes bad rhetoric.

The writer's metaphorical picture of a navigator was also found in [the 5th-century *History* of] Ghazar P'arpets'i, whose damaged text [in this section] has preserved only traces of it. The confusion in the preface to Ghazar may perhaps be explained by the attempt of a second hand to adapt it with the revised preface to *Agathangeghos.*

The story of the *Anonymous* in Sebeos also claims the name of Agathangeghos, Tiridates' skilled secretary. Formerly, this story, in one form or another, was part of [the *History* of] P'awstos Buzand. How it was separated is unknown. The name of Agathangeghos seems to have nothing to do with it. In the question of the preface of *Agathangeghos,* one would be wrong not to take into account the information of the *Anonymous*, insofar as it mentions Tiridates' secretary. These are two knots in a mysterious thread, tied, perhaps simultaneously. We are not aiming to concern ourselves **[240]** with these knots. What interests us is the fate of the fragment mentioned in the Greek *Agathangeghos.*

Let us even admit that this fragment did not exist in the Armenian text, or that it was taken from somewhere else.

The Greek translation was probably made by an Armenian. He must have taken the fragment from another Armenian writing, if not from *Agathangeghos.* This means that the epic story of Ardashir was familiar in Armenian circles.

It seems that the present *Agathangeghos* has preserved other motifs converging with the *Karnamak* or other documents of this kind.

Ardashir fled with a young girl from the court of Ardavan, in the direction of southern Persia, to incite a revolt against Ardavan. His supporter was, it seems, a nobleman, a prince of Isfahan, named *Banak.* This one too, a fugitive who had fallen into disgrace, lived retired from the court with his sons. Ardashir initially distrusted Banak, believing that he harbored the secret design of seizing him and delivering him to King Ardavan. Banak reassured him in every way and swore to serve him faithfully.

Ardashir continues on his way, but immediately returns to Banak and, together with him, attacks Ardavan, massacres his troops, and seizes his inheritance.

Another feat of Ardashir is his fight against the *dev* ("monster") Haftanbokht. The latter is a colossal force, which the Persian hero cannot defeat; after several failures, he flees to escape the terrible enemy.

Along the way, Ardashir stops in a village and—posing as a simple rider from Ardashir's defeated troops—asks for hospitality from brothers named *Burjak* and *Burjaktur.* The brothers welcome this unknown stranger. Ardashir quickly becomes familiar with them and makes himself known. Together they seek a way to destroy Haftanbokht. It is decided that Ardashir should enter the monster's service in disguise. This plan is carried out. When he has gained the trust of the monster and his servants, Ardashir takes charge of giving the monster food. Just as it waits for its meal with its mouth open, Ardashir pours molten lead into it. The monster immediately bursts and dies.

We see that the history of the Sassanids also has its place in the famous national epic, the *Shahname*. The legends mentioned about the life of Ardashir are found there without modification. The only difference is **[241]** that Prince Banak is called Tabak here and that he is not from Isfahan, but from Djahram:

> Yeki namvar bud names Tabak
> Ki ber sahr Jahram bud u padsa

Tabak had seven sons, Banak in the *Karnamak* had six. Tabak, upon hearing of Ardashir's revolt, abandoned Bahman, the son of Ardavan, and went over to the insurgents' camp. With Bahman defeated, Ardashir invaded the city of Stahr, which appeared to be the central seat of Bahman's authority. At first, Tabak, like Banak, did not inspire confidence in Ardashir; but when, holding the sacred book of the *Avesta* in his hands, he swore that he was his docile servant and that he had no intention of treason, Ardashir welcomed him and, with his help, won the victory over Bahman.

The *Shahname* also knows the story of the monster whose name appears as Haftwad there, instead of the Haftanbokht of the *Karnamak.* The poet supposedly derived this name from the fact that the

monster had seven sons. Haftwad was a poor man; thanks to his daughter, he obtained a marvelous worm which grew and acquired the size and strength of an elephant. Ardashir, with the help of Mihrak, son of Nouizad, kills the monster in the same way that he killed Haftanbokht, that is to say, he enters disguised into the service of the monster and kills him by pouring molten lead on him. In the *Karnamak*, Mihrak, the son of Anoshebad, on the contrary, resists Ardashir and falls to his sword.

The feudal milieu of Armenia was certainly not immune to the creation of such legends. The fabulous story of Ardashir was widespread and well-known in Armenia, even in the time of Movses of Khoren [In English, at Internet Archive, Book Two, chapters 67 ff]. It was even more detailed than that given in the *Karnamak*. In principle, it is quite possible that Iranian heroic literature had an influence on Armenian fiction, particularly on the birth of the national legends that were created around the kings Khosrov and Tiridates, contemporaries and rivals of Adashir.

From this point of view, it would be interesting to pause at Banak, the prince of Isfahan. Firdousi [author of the *Shahname*] calls him *Tabak*. The *Banak* reading is not certain; according to Nöldecke, one can also read *Bohak*. Does not such uncertainty lead to suspecting an **[242]** affinity of these names with Anak, the name of the father of the Illuminator according to *Agathangeghos?* The Pahlavi characters having a confusing similarity, paleography cannot decisively oppose this conjecture, however risky it may be.

Banak, as well as Tabak, are from the same Parthian lineage as the traitor Anak. One is from the vicinity of Isfahan, the other from Djahram, which is identified with the present-day Garoun. Both are chiefs of countries under the authority of Ardavan, as was Anak the Parthian. Banak has shown himself as unfaithful and treacherous towards his sovereign Ardavan, as Anak does in *Agathangeghos*. Banak abandons Ardavan to serve the cause of Ardashir and he helps him to kill Ardavan; this is exactly how Anak behaves towards the Armenian king Khosrov.

Ardashir's struggle with Haftanbokht gives rise to this other epic theme—which represents feigned friendship and trust, secured with the intention of committing assassination. Ardashir's conduct towards Ardavan is entirely that of Anak towards Khosrov. The monster Haftanbokht, an allegorical image, obviously embodies the ancient beliefs, condemned to disappear when the religious renaissance of Iran was accomplished with the arrival on the throne of the Sassanid sovereigns. The Parthian cult gives way to Mazdaism, or more precisely the latter is declared the state religion. It is not without purpose that the *Karnamak* says that after the assassination of Haftanbokht, Ardashir reestablished the great festivals of Mihrakan and Seda.

Besides *Haftanbokht* and *Haftwad*, there is a third form of the monster's name, *Astawad*, given by Tabari, in the summary accounts of the legends we have been studying (Nöldecke, Tabari, pp. 10-11). This diversity is itself a sign that the monster's true name has undergone an alteration and needs to be reestablished. We would be wrong not to dwell on the passage from *Agathangeghos*, according to which King Tiridates, having repelled Ardashir's attack, ordered people to go and make vows to the gods in the temples with the seven altars. This rather vague expression leads us to wonder if there is not a connection or correlation between *Haftanbokht* and the Armenian *eut'n-bagin* "seven altars"? Would it be possible to connect it with the controversial name of the Iranian monster? Is this name related to the cult of the seven altars, or does the Armenian expression itself conceal something more than the ordinary meaning? The latter hypothesis seems less likely.

In the trap set for Haftanbokht, Ardashir was helped by the **[243]** brothers *Burj* and *Burjaktur.* The *Karnamak* relates that Ardashir's father, Sassan, had seen in a dream the three sacred fires—Froba, Gushnasp and Burdjin—bursting into flames and illuminating the whole world: a sign of his son's imminent success. The brothers in question are certainly only incarnate images of the fire Burzin.

The first fire, Froba, or more precisely Farnbag, was considered the protector of worship, the second, Adr-Gushnasp, was that of war, the third, Burzin-Mihr, was that of agriculture. The *Burj* of the *Karnamak* represents the third hearth, Burzin-Mihr, as well as his brother Burjaktur. Burjaktur could be, perhaps, an alteration of the word *burjakdar,* the mage officiant in charge of maintaining the fire of Burz, or another form of Burzin-Mihr, the last element being the word *at(u)r* "fire". Burjak(a)tur or Atr-Burzin. *Atur*—Arm. ատր—is the oldest form of the Persian *adr* "fire" and Burjak is the diminutive of Burzin-Burzhin.

In any case, it is surprising that these imaginary brothers left their shadow in Armenian traditions. The rationalist historian Movses of Khoren, as was his custom, sought to cover these fabulous beings with real clothing. According to his interpretation, the clan of the Karenean Pahlavids, who were related to Ardavan by kinship ties, fought against Ardashir under the leadership of Vehsachan. But, with Karen defeated and his entire family massacred, only one child was saved by flight to the land of the Kushans. The child's savior was none other than one of the family's intimates, named Burz. Now, this Burz is certainly the same person as Burj or Burjaktur of the *Karnamak.*

Burz fled to the Kushans. These are the same people as the Euthalites or Hephthalites, who had settled in the northern regions above Khorasan in the 5th and 6th centuries. Burj and Burjaktur of the *Karnamak* also came from Khorasan, and it was for this reason that Ardashir disguised himself as a Khorasanian to plot against Haftanbokht, quite a significant coincidence! This is a further argument in favor of our interpretation that Burj or Burz are merely the personification of the sacred fire of Burzin-Mihr. It is known that the main fire temple, *atrushan,* of Burzin-Mihr was located in Khorasan, in the city of Revand, not far from Nishapur. It was here, in Revand, that the Armenian priests, victims of the revolt of 451 in Armenia, suffered martyrdom. [The 5th-century Armenian historian] Ghazar P'arbets'i calls the place Revan.

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Vehsachan of Armenian legend is related to Barchan of the *Karnamak.* Ardashir, after defeating Ardavan, marched against Barchan, the king of Karman, who had given asylum to two of Ardavan's sons, while the other two sons had taken refuge with the king of Kabul.

In Movses of Khoren, the Pahlavids of the Karnan [Karen] branch attacked Ardashir under the command of Vehsachan. It follows that Karnan corresponds to Karman and Vehsachan to Bachan, whose Parthian form must have been Varchan. The Armenian Vehsachan (վեհսաճան) could be read Vehrachan (վեհռաճան), which would be closer to Varchan. As for the confusion of Karnan, a family name, with Karman, a province of Persia, such is the nature of popular legends.

One more observation. Tabari relates, probably from documents of the *Karnamak* type, that King Ardavan, in order to blame Ardashir for his revolt, sent him a letter in which he said: "You are guilty of having exceeded the measure; by this you have prejudged your fate, O Kurd, you who were born under the tent of the Kurds." (Nöldecke, Tabari, pp. 11-12).

Movses of Khoren was not unaware of such an insult. When Eruand learned that Smbat the Bagratid was trying to have Prince Artashes ascend to his father's throne against Eruand himself, the latter sent one of his intimates to blame him in these terms: "Deceived by your nurse, you raise this son of a Mede against me." Here, by "Mede," Kurd is meant.

This is another manifestation that literary themes specific to the *genre* of the *Karnamak* were familiar in Armenian circles.

These connections lead to only one conclusion, namely that *Agathangeghos'* information on the mutual relations of Tiridates and Gregory, as well as that relating to their origin, are not without some epic coloration. It is difficult to go further. The testimony of the Syrian bishop George is certainly of a nature to encourage us in our doubt, but we must nevertheless be cautious with regard to this Syrian revelation, however seductive it may be. Bishop George lived in the first half of the 8th century (d. 740). He had at his disposal a source, in which the illuminator of the country of Armenia was considered to be of Roman origin. Arriving in Armenia as a young man, he would have been raised there, would have learned the Armenian language and literature, then having become a friend of Tiridates, he would become the author of his conversion.

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Taking these words seriously, one might believe that Gregory is called Roman in the sense that he was born in Armenia Minor, under Roman rule, and that he originated from this fertile environment where the famous Cappadocian fathers named Gregory also were born.

However, it would be unwise to trust the Syrian bishop without reservation. Either he himself or the author from whom he drew his information seems to have confused Gregory with Agathangeghos. His assertion agrees well with what Agathangeghos says about himself, namely, that he was a Roman who came to Armenia, and grew close to Tiridates, also becoming his secretary. According to the Syrian bishop, Gregory learned Armenian writing. This detail alone is enough to shake faith in its veracity, since the Armenian alphabet arose after Gregory's time.

Our study may be summarized with the following conclusion: that the work *Agathangeghos* in its historical part was influenced by Persian epic literature, oral or written, and, consequently, has been distorted to the detriment of strict factual accuracy.

Wikipedia:

- Agathangeghos
- Gregory the Illuminator
- Zenob Glak

Internet Archive:

"The Third-Century Armenian Arsacids: A Chronological and Genealogical Commentary," by Cyril Toumanoff, from *Revue des études arméniennes* 6(1969), pp. 233-281.

Studies by Cyril Toumanoff at Internet Archive.

Studies by Nicholas Adontz at Internet Archive.

"The Romance of Artaban and Artašir in Agathangelos' History," translation and commentary by Gohar Muradyan and Aram Topchyan, from the journal *e-Sasanika* 4 (2008), in 8 searchable pdf pages. The article contains an English translation and the Greek original of an Iranian story about the overthrow of the last Arsacid king of Iran, in A.D. 226.

Agat'angeghos' History of the Armenians. Robert W. Thomson's 1976 full English translation (for borrowing only).

The *Shahname* or *Book of Kings*:

The only freely available and complete English translation of Iran's magnificent epic, the *Shahname/Shahnama* or *Book of Kings*, was done by the brothers Arthur and Edmond Warner. The Warners' enormous translation was published in nine volumes between 1905 and 1925 in *Trübner's Oriental Series*. Although in verse, most sections also have prose explanations and good notes. The history of the Arsacids/Ashkanians and Sasanids is in volume 6 (London, 1912). Other editions are available here.